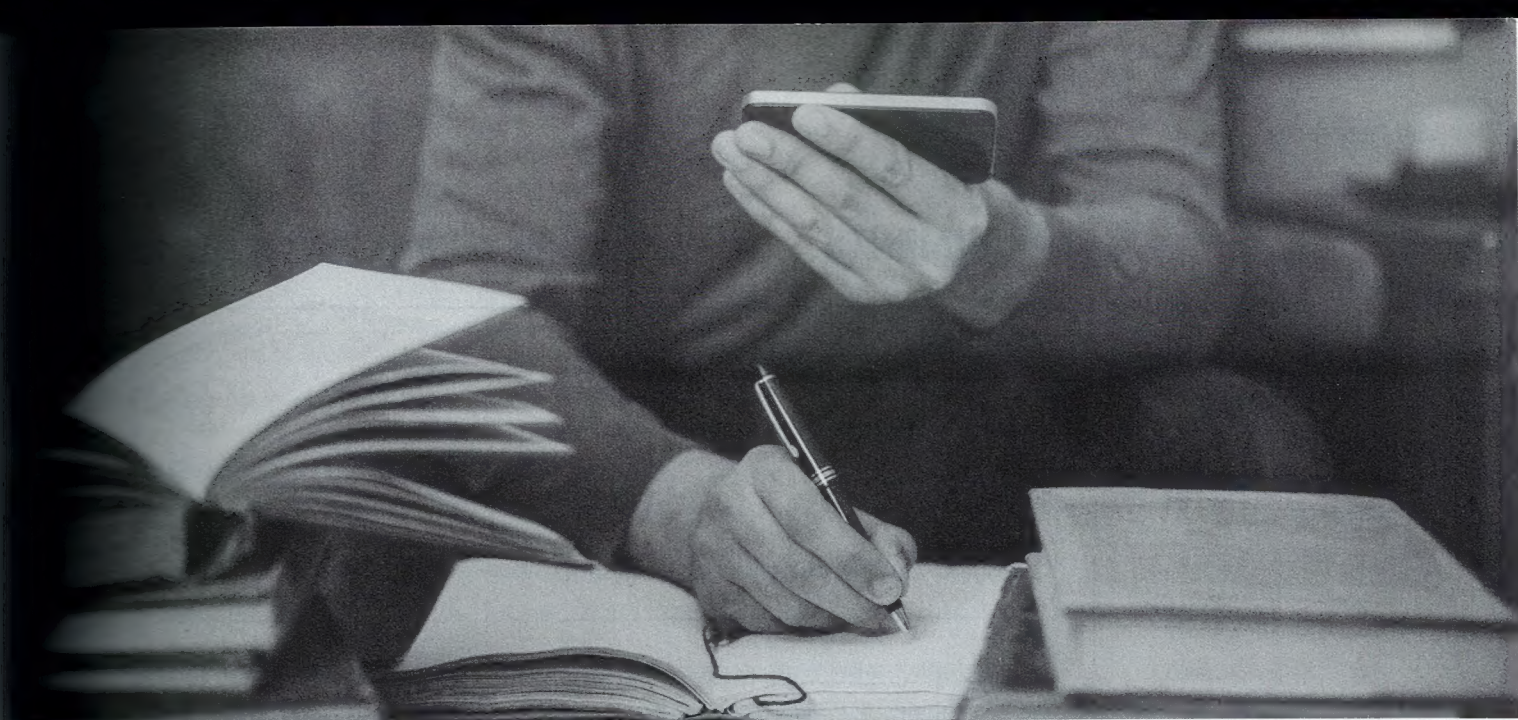




Chapter 6

Putting It All Together

You've worked through five pretty arduous chapters of *LSAT Premium Prep*. How should you feel? Answer: CONFIDENT! Why? Because you've been given a specific process and approach for each section of the LSAT. You've got a good game plan—and the team with the good game plan usually wins the game. This chapter contains a quick review of your game plan for each section of the exam, as well as some pacing suggestions and tips for the day of the test.

ARGUMENTS

Step 1: Assess the question

Step 2: Analyze the argument

Step 3: Act

Step 4: Answer using Process of Elimination

Pretty simple, right? Well, many people begin to get anxious and they tend to skip Step 3. They want to get right to the answer choices so they can start getting confused and frustrated. However, Step 3 is the most important step in this process. If you come up with your own ideas about what should be the right answer before looking at any of the choices, you'll be misled less often by those appealing but wrong answer choices.

GAMES

Step 1: Diagram and inventory

Step 2: Symbolize the clues and double-check

Step 3: Look for links and size up the game

Step 4: Assess the question

Step 5: Act

Step 6: Answer using Process of Elimination

As in Arguments, many students tend to skip an essential step in the games process. That step is Step 3 (again). Students usually see how necessary it is to draw a diagram and symbolize the clues, but then they get nervous that they've spent so much time drawing and symbolizing that they go straight to the questions. However, looking at the diagram and the symbols you've drawn for 30 seconds before going to the questions will invariably make the game easier—any deductions you make will actually save you time by making you more efficient in answering the questions.

READING COMPREHENSION

Step 1: Prepare

Step 2: Assess

Step 3: Act

Step 4: Answer

Well, here we've once again highlighted Step 3 because it's the most important step and it's the one students tend to skip most often. Again, nervousness about time is the culprit. But as you learned in the Reading Comprehension chapter, pinpointing the correct answer choice becomes much easier when you've already got an idea of what you should be looking for. Don't let the answer choices confuse you—approach the test questions by being ready for them as much as possible.

PACING

The most important principle to keep in mind when you're planning your pacing is balance. Remember that there are two things that determine effective pacing: your speed (the number of questions you attempt) and your accuracy (the chance that, when you attempt a question, you will get it right). Generally, as your speed increases, your accuracy decreases. The challenge is to find the peak pacing strategy for yourself on each section.

The only way to do this effectively is through practice, practice, practice, and analysis, analysis, analysis. Most test-takers do not perform optimally if they charge through at maximum speed. Similarly, dawdling and second-guessing yourself will not get you the most points. You need to adopt a strategy that allows you to slow down in the places you need to, but at the same time keeps you pushing through the questions that come more easily to you so you can devote time where it's needed.

The ideal way to strike this balance differs from section to section and is determined by the different natures of the questions. We have some more specific pacing guidelines for you below, but of course, knowing what target you have to hit is different from knowing how it feels to hit that target. To that end, here are some general pacing thoughts on each of the sections of the exam.

Games

Two things about Games are particularly relevant to pacing: first, getting yourself ready to work a game takes a relatively long time; second, Games questions are constructed so that with a solid approach, you can be certain of getting a right answer on any question you attempt.

For this section, you will need to lean heavily toward accuracy. Investing the time needed to make that last decision between two answer choices is unquestionably worth it, even if it seems like a fair amount of work. Take advantage of this section by working for accuracy, and then trusting your work. All you have to do on a Games question is *either* find the one right answer *or* find the four wrong ones, not both. Once you've done this on a question, pick the answer and go.

Try not to change your mind once you've started a game. Otherwise, you're throwing away valuable time. Working a game you've already set up, even if the questions are hard, is typically a better use of your time than working a different game from start to finish. Of course, you want to do everything you can to pick the best games to do, which makes spending a little time on selection eminently worth it.

Arguments

On Arguments, the initial investment for a question is relatively small; and on many Arguments questions, there are things you can do to decide between close answer choices—but only up to a point.

The best approach here is to value speed and accuracy equally. On an easy Arguments question (there are usually many of these toward the beginning of the section), you should be able to proceed through POE and spot one that definitely looks best. In that case, pick it and go.

On a medium Arguments question, you may have two or three answer choices that seem possible. In that case, slow down—look at the conclusion of the argument, review the question if you're uncertain what it's asking you to do, look at the choices carefully, and make close comparisons. Making smart decisions in the down-to-two situation is how you make your money on the Arguments sections.

On difficult Arguments questions (many of these will be near the end of the section), mistrust answers that look extremely attractive. Keep an open mind as you look at the others, and if you're down to two here, follow the same process you use for medium questions. Look for subtle problems. If you can't find them, then go with the choice you thought was right at first and move on. However, if an answer looks too good to be true on a hard question, it probably is.

Pacing

Trust your gut. You know the difference between chipping away at a difficult question and spinning your wheels trying to comprehend what you are reading.

If you begin an Arguments question and it baffles you right away, move on. You can always come back to it, and you haven't lost much if you spend just a little time and then decide to do something else. Similarly, if you've done everything you can in that down-to-two situation and have nothing else to go on, pick the answer you like better and move on. It takes only one or two questions that eat up a lot of time to hurt you on an Arguments section. Be willing to slow down, but don't ever stop.

Reading Comprehension

Speed and efficiency are important on Reading Comprehension. Remember that you don't get points for memorizing the passage; you're reading it to find the answers to the questions. Get through the initial preparation of the passage fairly quickly without getting bogged down in the details; you can always come back for them later. In this stage, avoid reading parts of the passage over and over; keep moving and come back to difficult sections of the passage only if necessary when answering the questions. However, you *do* need to get a basic understanding of the bottom line of the author's argument. Don't read the passage so quickly that you get little or nothing out of it.

Don't just skim the questions or answer choices in the Assess, Act, and Answer steps; read them carefully, word for word. Always go back to the passage when you are answering the questions. Read for context; don't answer the questions based on only a quick glance at isolated words or phrases from the passage. When you are down to two answer choices, compare them with each other and look for relevant differences. You may need to go back to the passage again at this stage to make a final choice. If you are still stuck, take your best shot, remembering how the test-writers create attractive wrong answers, and continue on. You can come back one more time before you move on to the next passage; sometimes getting a little distance from the question helps you to see what you didn't understand at first. However, don't spend a large percentage of your valuable time on a single question.

Of course, selection is important here, but not nearly as important as it is on Games. Evaluate each passage and the questions very quickly before diving in. If it looks nasty from the outset, then move to another passage; otherwise, start the passage and stick with it.



This is a general chart.
Don't worry about
being so exact here.

Here's a chart to help you assess your performance on the practice tests.

Pacing Yourself			
If you received...	Your first goal is...	Your intermediate goal is...	Your final goal is...
25–45% correct on Arguments	Work 12–15 Arguments and try to get 10–12 right in 35 minutes	Work 15–18 Arguments and try to get 12–15 right in 35 minutes	Work 18–21 Arguments and try to get 15–18 right in 35 minutes
45–65% correct on Arguments	Work 15–18 Arguments and try to get 12–15 right in 35 minutes	Work 18–21 Arguments and try to get 15–18 right in 35 minutes	Work 21–24 Arguments and try to get 18–21 right in 35 minutes
65–85% correct on Arguments	Work 18–22 Arguments and try to get 15–18 right in 35 minutes	Work 22–24 Arguments and try to get 18–21 right in 35 minutes	Work all the Arguments and try to get 20–23 right in 35 minutes
25–45% correct on Games	Do two Games correctly in 35 minutes	Get through two full Games and halfway through a third one in 35 minutes	Do three Games correctly in 35 minutes
45–65% correct on Games	Get through two full Games and half of a third Game in 35 minutes	Get through three complete Games in 35 minutes, missing only one or two questions	Get through three full Games and half of a fourth Game in 35 minutes
65–85% correct on Games	Do three full Games in 35 minutes	Do three complete Games in 35 minutes and get halfway through the fourth game	Get through the entire section missing only a few questions in 35 minutes
20–35% correct on Reading Comprehension	Do two Reading Comprehension passages in 35 minutes, trying to miss only one question per passage	Do two full Reading Comprehension passages and get halfway through a third passage in 35 minutes	Do three full Reading Comprehension passages in 35 minutes
35–50% correct on Reading Comprehension	Do two full Reading Comprehension passages and get halfway through a third passage in 35 minutes	Do three full Reading Comprehension passages in 35 minutes	Do three full Reading Comprehension passages and get halfway through the fourth passage in 35 minutes
50–80% correct on Reading Comprehension	Do three Reading Comprehension passages in 35 minutes, trying to miss only one question per passage	Do three full Reading Comprehension passages and get halfway through the fourth passage in 35 minutes	Do four full Reading Comprehension passages in 35 minutes

EVALUATING YOUR PERFORMANCE

One of the most important things you can do to continue to improve your score is to analyze the work you do in order to better gauge both the areas in which you're making errors and the amount of time you need to spend on a given question or group of questions to ensure a high level of accuracy. Here we'll discuss several ways to accomplish this.

As we recommended for the practice drills that accompany each of the chapters on Arguments, Games, and Reading Comprehension, it's a good idea to measure how long it takes you to do a game or passage or set of arguments accurately. There's no point rushing to get to questions (and wasting brain power) if you're not going to give yourself the opportunity to get those questions right. Remember, your score is based on how many questions you answer correctly, not on how many questions you actually get to attempt (and of course you're still choosing answers for those you don't attempt). By measuring how long it takes, on average, to work accurately through a game, passage, or group of, say, eight arguments, you can build realistic expectations of how much you'll be able to do on a given timed section. This is important because it can help you set reachable goals for each area of the LSAT—for example, you can't expect to get to all four games if you generally need to spend 15 minutes on just one of them.

To measure your work time, set your timer to count up, not down, and then don't look at it while you're working. Put it face down, in a drawer, or even in another room if necessary. When you've finished working, stop the clock and note the time elapsed. Then check your answers to see how accurate you were. If you missed half or more, you're definitely going too quickly. If, however, you got almost all of them correct, then you can start to think about where you might be able to speed up. Did you linger at an answer choice to convince yourself that it was really right, although you knew the other four choices were unequivocally wrong? Did you try to disprove all the choices in a Games question although you already had the answer in your diagram? As you continue to work questions, you'll eventually find that you hit your optimal speed for each section—if you go any slower, you won't get to the number of questions you know you need to answer to reach your goal, but if you work any faster, your careless errors will increase sharply.

Once you have an idea of how many questions you can reasonably expect to get to, you can start to figure out how you're going to get the score you want. Let's say you're aiming for a 160. You'd need approximately 75 correct answers to achieve that score. (You should use the conversion chart from the most recent LSAT you've ordered when making these estimates.) Perhaps Reading Comprehension is one of your strengths, so you can count on 23 out of 27 questions. Or maybe you average about 18 correct on an Arguments section. That leaves 16 that you'll need to pick up in the Games section. Are you stronger in Games? Then your goal might be 20 from Games and only 21 from Reading Comprehension, with an Arguments goal of 17 per section. Is your goal a 150? That's about 56 questions. How you break that down will be up to you, based on your own strengths and weaknesses.

As with all things on the LSAT, however, it's important not to overanalyze. Not all Games sections are the same (or Arguments or Reading Comprehension, for that matter), which means you shouldn't expect to do the same on every one of them you work. Keep this in mind while you're planning your pacing adjustments and also while you're taking your test. If you came up a little short on Games, don't panic; chances are that you'll be able to pick up the slack on Arguments as long as you give yourself the chance. Setting goals is important, and it's important to have a plan for achieving them, but always be willing to improvise. Focus on what you can control, and take the test as it comes.

Okay, you've figured out how many more questions you need to get right to achieve your goal score. How do you go about fixing your errors? You want to keep track of your progress, preferably in a notebook, on each drill or timed section you do. Analysis is the key to better performance. After each drill or timed section, write down the drill or section number, and for each question you did, note the question number, question type, whether you got it right or wrong, and what happened if you did indeed miss it. After a while, you may begin to see patterns emerge. Maybe you always miss questions that ask what "must be false" because you forget the "false," or you constantly pick answer choices that go beyond the scope of a passage; or you lose focus when tackling EXCEPT questions. Or maybe there's a particular question type you keep misidentifying, or you're not picking the best questions for you to attempt. Whatever the problem is, you have to be able to diagnose it before you can fix it. Keeping track of your progress and reviewing the notes you make about questions you miss will help you further structure your preparation.

ADDITIONAL PRACTICE TIPS

Here are a few final, extra things to think about.

- Try to time your LSAT practice to the time of day you'll be taking the real thing. At the very least, start your practice tests at the same time that the real test will be given. For an afternoon test administration, this means you'll want to concentrate your study time during the afternoon; for all other administrations of the test, you'll want to practice in the morning.
- If you're taking a practice test with only three sections, it's a really good idea to take an extra section from one of the real LSATs you've ordered and use it as an experimental section when taking full-length practice tests. It will build your stamina, and it will give you a chance to practice with an extra section of each type of question because you never know what question type you could see as an experimental section on test day. Even when doing individual timed sections, try to do a couple of sections back-to-back before checking your answers. Get used to focusing for longer periods of time.

- Don't forget to check out our free online tools at PrincetonReview.com/prep. You just need to have this book handy when you log in for the first time.

THE DAY OF THE TEST

There is probably just as much bad advice as good advice dispensed about what to do on test day. A lot of the good advice is just common sense, but we're going to give it to you here just in case you're a bit distracted.

Visit Your Test Location Before Test Day

Why worry on test day about the best way to get to your test location? If you don't plan to take the test at home, visit your test location a few weeks or days before the test so you know exactly where to go on test day. Better yet, go there with a practice LSAT and try to get into the room where you're going to take the LSAT. Work the test in that room, if possible, so you're on familiar ground the day of the test. This will do wonders for your comfort and confidence. You'll know if the room is hot or cold, what the lighting is like, whether you'll be working at an individual desk or a long table, and so on. Use the Boy Scout motto here: be prepared.

Eat and Drink What You Normally Eat and Drink

People have many different ideas about what to eat and drink on the morning of the test. The most important thing is not to vary dramatically from what you normally ingest. Don't eat a big, heavy breakfast that will leave you sluggish. Don't skip breakfast completely. Eat a reasonable meal that will prepare you for a grueling three-and-a-half-hour test. And don't experiment with caffeine. If you don't normally have coffee in the morning, don't start on test day. If you do normally have coffee in the morning, don't skip it on test day. The same advice applies if you get your caffeine from soda or any other caffeinated beverage.

Take a Snack

You can leave the testing room and have a snack during the 10-minute break if you choose to. Be prepared by having a bottle of water and a granola bar or a banana ready to go. You're not allowed to eat in the testing room, but you can always go outside and fuel up for the second half of the test.

Up-to-date Information:

Check out www.lsac.org for more information about specifics: locations, dates, and restrictions.

Use the Timer

LSAC does not permit the use of digital timers, but there is a timer built into the online exam. You can turn off the timer if you want to, but we recommend using the timer or an analog watch to track your time. You'll get a digital five-minute warning, so be sure to answer any remaining questions before the time is up.

Take Everything You'll Need

Yes, you will need to log into the testing website and present proper identification. Some allowed items you may want to have ready are a pen or pencil, five blank sheets of scratch paper, a highlighter, tissues, and a bottle of water. Refer to the registration instructions and follow the procedures outlined there. Don't leave any room for the unexpected.

Get There Nice and Early and Warm Up Your Brain

You're going to be stressed out enough on test day without worrying that you'll be late for the test. Get to wherever you plan to take the test nice and early and warm up your brain by working out a game that you've already done and perhaps by running through a few arguments. And don't bother to check the answers; the purpose is warming up, not diagnosis. That way, you'll already be in gear by the time you open up the first section. You want to hit the ground running so you won't be warming up on questions that count toward your score.

Some Stress Is Good; Too Much Stress Is Bad

We know you're going to be stressed the day of the exam, and a little stress is not a bad thing—it will keep you on your toes. But if you tend to get *really* stressed by standardized tests, try a yoga or meditation class, or some other type of relaxation therapy, preferably starting a month before the test. This way, you'll have some techniques to calm you down, taught to you by people who know what they're doing. One Princeton Review student had a dream about test day—she went into the test, and the bubbles were about five feet in diameter. She hadn't even finished bubbling in one bubble before the proctor called time. If you're having dreams like this, relaxation therapy might help.

Wear Layered Clothing

If you plan to take the test somewhere other than your home, who knows how cold or how warm the test location will be on test day? Wear your most comfortable layered clothing so you can put more layers on if you're cold or take layers off if you're hot.

Be Confident and Be Aggressive

When we talk to students after they've taken the LSAT, they often say, "By the time I got to section 4, I just didn't care anymore. I just filled in whatever." Don't say that; don't think that—section 4 will probably count because the experimental section could be any of the four sections. When you begin section 4, keep in mind that it's most likely a real section that will count toward your score. Your goal is to take three deep breaths and to fight your way through that last section, and approach it just as aggressively as you approached the other sections of the exam. It's going to count—don't lose your confidence and your energy here because it's almost over!

Here is another problem students have reported: "I was doing fine until I hit section 3. I didn't know how to do any of the Games, and I couldn't concentrate on the last two sections of the test." Well, guess what? That was probably the experimental section! Don't let a complex or tough section get you down, especially if it's early in the test. Remember that they are using the experimental sections to test new questions—some of them invariably will be a bit strange. And even if it is a section that ultimately counts toward your score, getting stressed out over it will only hurt your performance on that section and potentially on subsequent scored sections as well. Just roll with the punches.

Always Keep Your Cursor Moving

Actively using your online tools and scratch paper will help you to stay engaged. Eliminate all the wrong answer choices; highlight and underline key words in Reading Comprehension and Arguments passages; always diagram and symbolize in Games. By constantly keeping your cursor moving, you'll be keeping your brain moving as well.

If you find that you're losing focus, stop working for a second and regroup. Never waste time working on a question if your mind has gone astray or if you find that you can't focus on the task at hand. The few seconds you invest in a short break will pay off in the long run.

And remember that you can always come back to a question that is giving you grief. Just flag it so that you can find it later if you have time to come back to it. Don't spend too much time on any one question. It will only lead to frustration and lost points.

Your Test Day "Top Ten"

Here are the tips mentioned above in a handy numbered list. Find some room on the fridge.

1. Visit your test location before test day.
2. Eat and drink what you normally eat and drink.
3. Take a snack.
4. Use the timer.
5. Take everything you'll need.
6. Get there nice and early and warm up your brain.
7. Some stress is good; too much stress is bad.
8. Wear layered clothing.
9. Be confident and be aggressive.
10. Always keep your cursor moving.

Good luck on test day!

Summary

- As you practice, your approach will become more intuitive. Until then, be sure to focus on the steps we've outlined so that you have a systematic approach for every section of the test. Most important, do not forget to do a little work before rushing to the answer choices.
- Make sure you are totally prepared for test day. You can't control the questions you will see that day, but you can make sure that you are in the best position to answer those questions.